

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

4X10

Sound Explorations of Time

Image: Enock in Dal. Photography of an iceberg scanned with Photo Scan



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Sound Explorations of Time

March – June 2018

Lab 3

Artists: Andrés Posada y Rodrigo Henao • Eliana Beltrán • Ensemble ÆON (José Fernando García, Andrés Lozano, Juan José Madrigal, Juan Diego Micles, Esteban Pardo, Manuel Theo Dover, Matías Uribe) • [expr] Taller (Cristian Álvarez, Alejandro Bernal, José Gallardo, Daniel Martínez, Diego Molina, Alejandra Montes, Sebastián Orejarena, Diego Pulgarín, Gustavo Tapias) Jaime Carvajal • José Santamaría • Juan Esteban Gärtner • Julianna y Merino • Lucrecia Dalt • Miguel Isaza

“We try to work with very elaborate thought materials to make thinkable forces that are not thinkable on their own. The same thing happens with music when it elaborates a sound material to make audible forces that are not audible on their own. In music, it is no longer about an absolute ear, but an impossible ear that can alight on someone, briefly manifest itself to someone”.

Gilles Deleuze, *Le Temps musical*

In recent decades, we have witnessed changes in the traditional conception of music that point to a broader notion of sound. These changes also represent movements in our relationships to being and time. Medellín, in particular, is experiencing the rise of new propositions in sound creation. Notions such as acoustic ecology, sound art, noise, radio art, and soundscapes, among others, are increasingly common in exhibition projects and live acts that take place in various spaces in the city. These activities enrich creative possibilities and combine scholarly musical knowledge with the practical know-how of artists and professionals from other disciplines who have found their expression language in sound.

For this exhibition, the Medellín Museum of Modern Art called on ten sound projects in Medellín—six individual artists and four collectives—and invited them to reflect on the concept of time¹ through the commission of 4-minute pieces for a multi-speaker system. Together, they make up a 40-minute sound loop that alludes to the Museum's 40-year history. Thus, *4x10* offers visitors an acousmatic experience that requires an approximation to the space and a willingness to listen attentively. It invites us to decelerate the pace of life, to contemplate the way the world moves, and to perceive the beauty that exists between one moment and another through surrounding environments of sound.

The artists and works that make up the show are notable for their diversity. Without adhering to specific orders and genres, this exhibition brings together a group of artists involved in experimental music and contemporary sound creation whose work is related to Medellín. The exhibition also provided a lab space for artists to experiment around the human perception of sound through spatialization with multiple speakers, the use of technology, and new programming and compositional languages.

Contemplative worlds produced by bells that mark ceremonial time; soundscapes processed from rivers, streets, and places; the multiple timbres and sandy atmospheres of synthesizers; the elemental thump of a lithophone that evokes the voice of geological time; and even fragments of texts and phonetic poetry: these are some of the elements that can be heard in this exhibition.

In *Concentric Nothings*, Lucrecia Dalt presents a lyrical exercise in vocal dissolution that explores irreversible separability and entanglement in an elastic space of time from lyrics written by the artist in collaboration with Henry Andersen:

*Let my touch be indistinct and instinctive
Let my glance be passer-by
Let my system swallow its own system
Let my breath move outward in concentric nothings
Let it carry the news*

*Let my motion be expansive
Let my limits be as atmospheres and bracken
Let my decadence be candid
Let my wanting be scentless*

We had touched as only atmospheres touch.

Miguel Isaza used spectral/granular recording and processing of different objects to compose *Subscendence* (*Subscendencia*), a piece that deals with the equanimity of the hour and the second. It explores the idea that it is possible to contain large amounts of sound in small spaces of time (or vice versa) and to use sonic matter as a cosmological element, as well as to register listening as a theoretical speculative dimension. With this technique, sound presents itself as malleable time that can be granulated into milliseconds, sine waves, or elementary syllables.

Ghanta, by Andrés Posada and Rodrigo Henao, explores various sounds derived from five ghantas of various sizes. A ghanta is a rustic bell used in Hindu ceremonies. Its tinkle is considered an auspicious sound. The bells were tolled, rubbed, and scraped with various drumsticks and materials and the recordings were digitally processed to layer sound lines over each other. The piece starts with a single melody that glides up and down, and ends with a dense polyphonic texture. Throughout *Ghanta*, bells appear, building up, perhaps represents ceremonial calls or else simple rhythmic patterns that mark a passing.

In the piece *Bardo 02*, José Santamaría uses a limited sound palette to force the work of synthesis to its maximum expression. He extracts the sounds of rivers, capturing textures and timbres to deepen the concept of electronic music in its encounter with the musicality of seemingly non-musical sounds. Jaime Carvajal also uses field recordings in *Four Gestures for a Space* (*Cuatro gestos para un espacio*), capturing, analyzing, and processing recordings of Medellín (in Ciudad del Río and some of the Museum's interiors) with which he creates a piece that evokes ambient music, stimulating reflection and inviting calm. His granular landscapes induce us to meditate on time and space, using particles of sound captured from the environment.

In *Oxide* (*Óxido*), Juan Esteban Gärdner uses long sections of notes generated by modular synthesis and recorded on cassettes in order to alter their speed and add new textures that produce bright grains. In *Psyche* (*Psique*), Julianna and Merino use some of the tools they use to produce techno, such as the TR-08, field recordings, voice recordings, and several VSTs with which they compose a rhythmic and philosophical piece that alludes to dreamtime and the subconscious.

In their sound piece *Imbrication* (*Imbricación*), [expr] Taller de prácticas sonoras performs a collaborative composition inspired by minimalist music through the

superimposition of successive elements of timbre in a space of time, with an encrypted bassline and limited frequencies to which, little by little, other sound ranges are added, both acoustic and electronic. The ensemble begins with an economy of media and develops elements to their maximum expressiveness, creating an idea or imaginary and random representation for the listener.

13 rt U is an acousmatic work composed by the ÆÓN Ensemble. The track is built from a 18.46-second loop that is repeated 13 times. An everyday situation is narrated with incidental sounds that are processed through various mechanisms of digital synthesis.

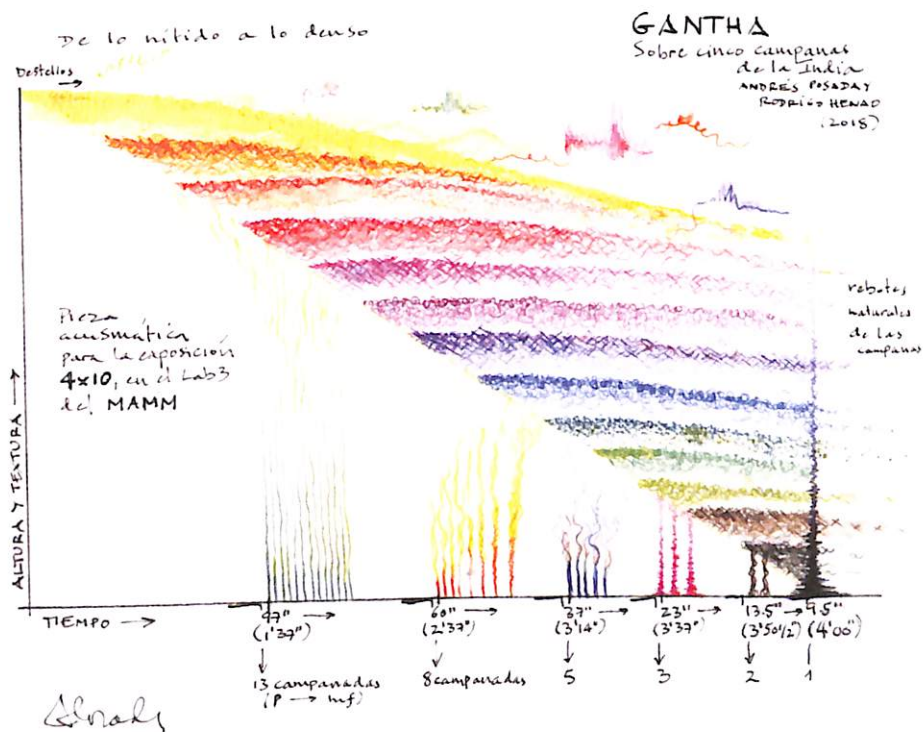
In her work *Venetia Phair Said Pluto* (*Venetia Phair dijo Plutón*), Eliana Beltrán brings together fragments of texts that discuss geological deep time, old theories about the origin of the material that makes up the earth's crust (Plutonism/Neptunism), and readings of Jimmie Durham and Richard Serra. This material is combined with the sound of a lithophone built by the artist. The work invites us to think of geological processes as a metaphor for the slow and feminine dimension of time represented by rocks.

Footnotes:

¹ During the twentieth century, sound (both musical and non-musical) was an object of study that evolved into new forms of expression and interpretation. The problem of time in music was also a location of analysis that was enriched by the rise of experimental music and sound art. An example of this is the conference held at IRCAM in February 1978, which brought together a group of musicians and philosophers (Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, and Gilles Deleuze) to discuss the theme *Le Temps musical*. Many later academic reflections on the subject arose from Deleuze's lecture at that event during which he presented his ideas about pulsed time and non-pulsed time, striated time and smooth time.

Another landmark in reflection on musical time and the sound arts was the New Music, New York festival held in 1979 and organized by The Kitchen, a center for experimental arts in New York. It marked the advent of minimalist and experimental music with performances by Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Tony Conrad, George Lewis, and Michael Nyman. The more contemporary version of the same festival was held in 2004, called New Sound, New York (the word *music* switched out for the word *sound*). In his essay *From Music to Sound: Being as Time in the Sonic Arts*, the philosopher Christoph Cox analyzes these festivals to delve into the problem of time in contemporary sound creation.

According to the conclusions provided by the essay, music constitutes a domain of beings, time-objects that spatialize sound and mark out a pulsed narrative and subjective time that is formed by beginnings, middles, and ends. In this way, sound reveals something different: not being on time but being as time, what Nietzsche calls "becoming" and Bergson "duration." That "sound" constitutes a kind of virtual or transcendental dimension, a vast field of sonic forces and flows in relation to which any particular sound environment or a piece of music becomes a moving section. Music tends to close off this domain or experience and offers the illusion of being: autonomy, delimitation, fixation, and human invention. Thus, by opening up this field, sound art transmits the idea of a virtual whole. With Gilles Deleuze's analysis, we can think of sound as an anonymous, non-human, impersonal flow that bears a resemblance to geology.



Graphic score of *Gantha* by Andrés Posada

References:

Gilles Deleuze. *Le Temps musical*, from the translation into Spanish by Miguel Ángel Leal published by El Latido de la Máquina, México, 2015.
Available at: <https://issuu.com/ellatidodelamaquina>

Christoph Cox. *From Music to Sound: Being as Time in the Sonic Arts*. Available at: <http://www.kim-cohen.com/>

Max Neuhaus, "Program notes" Sound Works. Available at: [www.max-neuhaus](http://www.max-neuhaus.com)



Acknowledgements: Pintuco